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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the need for a more substantial and publicly available base of information and analysis of initial teacher education in Australia, so that the school teaching profession, school authorities, and the Commonwealth can join with teacher educators in developing optimal programs, policies, and strategy. The paper then describes a project to gather information from all initial teacher education programs in Australia and to collect in-depth information about key programs which best exemplify particular approaches or innovations. Information to be collected will address course philosophy and objectives, course structure, content, pedagogy and sites of learning, assessment methods and criteria; and partnerships and collaboration in course development and/or delivery. Appended to the paper is a response sheet for workshop participants to indicate their perceptions of areas in which data collection, analysis, and dissemination are needed. (Contains 11 references.) (JDD)

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INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA: A STUDY IN PROGRESS

A background paper and workshop material

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Australian Teacher Education Association Annual Conference, Brisbane, 5 July 1994

ED 376 136

Project background

The Australian Council of Deans of Education has commissioned the Centre for Research in Professional Education at the University of Canberra to carry out a survey of initial teacher education programs in Australia.

The project arose out of a recognition that significant developments are occurring in initial teacher education in the context of a thin public knowledge base.

In a number of Australian universities initial teacher education programs are undergoing substantial change. Those changes arise out of concerns to improve the quality of programs and in response to external pressures such as funding reductions or the need to reduce the size of Education faculties. In addition, a greater role in the planning and/or delivery of initial teacher education programs is developing for the school teaching profession, school authorities and other parties.

There is continuing debate about what constitutes high quality initial teacher education (though there is common agreement that a diversity of approaches is appropriate). Yet there is a dearth of accessible information about initial teacher education as it currently exists in Australia.

Some programs (especially those recently developed) have detailed documentation, but many do not, and what documentation that is available is seldom disseminated beyond those involved in the courses and accreditation processes within institutions. Teacher educators in contact with colleagues in other universities may be in touch with developments in those other institutions. However, there is no over-all picture.

The dearth of information about teacher education extends to official statistics collected and published by the Higher Education Division of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), and used by ministers and others in policy development related to teacher education (see DEET 1992, pages 1 and 27 to 32; Beazley 1993, page 15). To put it quite simply, the classification by DEET of courses and enrolments into the two major categories of 'initial' and 'post initial' is, for all significant purposes, useless. This is because a very large proportion (in some states a large majority) of diploma of education courses are classified as 'post initial' or as neither 'initial' nor 'post initial', and many fourth year BEd courses (in which practicing teachers are often the majority enrollees) are classified as 'initial'. Thus, secondary teacher education (and male) students tend to be understated as 'initial' students and overstated as 'post initial' students, while the reverse distortion occurs for primary teacher education (and female) students. Whether the net effect is an understating or overstating of enrolments in preservice relative to inservice (and other) can only be determined by a more detailed consideration of the statistics - course by course. The Higher Education Division has been aware of this problem for some years, but accurate

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information about teacher education is not sufficiently high on the agenda for anything to be done about it.

It has become a stock response in some influential quarters to say that there have been enough reports on teacher education, that we all know what we need to know - and now is the time for action, for reform, for renewal. (Of course action, reform and renewal do not need to *wait* for better information and understanding - but future action is likely to be more effective if it is better informed.)

This lack of concern with accurate and substantial information about teacher education contrasts with the commitment to high quality data about many facets of schooling made publicly available through the annual *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (Australian Education Council 1993) and other publications.

Teacher education has been fairly high on the international policy agenda since the mid 1980s and the work of the OECD Education Committee Working Party on 'The Condition of Teaching' which culminated in the report, *The Teacher Today* (OECD 1990).

While there have been a number of reports and policy statements concerning initial teacher education over recent years, there have not been inquiries or reports which have studied in any useful detail what actually happens in teacher education courses since the 1988/89 Discipline Review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science (Speedy 1989). That excellent and detailed review had as its focus particular aspects of teacher education, and the enterprise as a whole was only considered in as far as it was necessary to understand aspects of teacher education in mathematics and science. Unfortunately it appears that the various reports and policy documents which have appeared in the years since the Speedy report have tended not to draw from its rich lode of analysis and information about teacher education.

Some reports, though well intentioned, betrayed a poor understanding of the field and showed the consequences of relying on the poor statistics available from DEET. For example, the Schools Council's *Teacher Quality: An Issues Paper* (1989) - which significantly advanced debate about many aspects of teacher professionalism - indicated that 'the Schools Council believes that sooner or later four-year training must be a necessary minimum for the great majority of teachers' (page 21). However, in the preceding paragraph the cost of moving to a four year standard for all initial teacher education was over-estimated by about a factor of ten - a cost of about $105 million, compared with the $14 million indicated by the Working Party of the Australian Education Council chaired by Fred Ebbeck (NBEET 1990a, page 47). It appears that the Schools Council counted as students commencing a three year diploma of teaching (or equivalent) all students commencing diploma or bachelor courses in Education (including four year concurrent courses and the inservice fourth year BEd), and did not take into account the current cost of the fourth year of the 3 + e + 1 model.

At about the same time the Higher Education Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training was investigating course length and nomenclature in high education courses. One of the controversial areas was course length of initial teacher education. The Council suggested in its discussion paper (Higher Education Council 1989, pages 7-8) that a three year degree (not diploma) be the standard award for primary and early childhood education, and rejected any move to a four year program as too expensive. The Council apparently did not consider the fourth year of the 3 + e + 1 model as part of the 'standard', or as a factor in the estimation of cost. 'For the sake of consistency' the Council suggested that the four year BEd for preparing secondary teachers be replaced by a three year BTeach followed by a diploma in a subject area (page 8). The Council's final report on the issues (Higher Education Council 1990) was less specific, but made a general statement of

reluctance to support any lengthening of professional courses (page 12), and indicated that any lengthening should only occur with the agreement of all stakeholders (page 14). While this project played a part in the developing debate about length of initial teacher education, it did not draw from or contribute to any substantial new information about teacher education in Australia.

The inquiry of the Working Party of the Australian Education Council, established in 1989, took up a very broad brief of initial and inservice teacher education, and national recognition of teacher qualifications. The Working Party was poorly resourced, and understandably gave much attention to working through its many innovative and controversial recommendations and suggestions. Input to the inquiry involved solicited submissions (most teacher education institutions presented written submissions) and consultations. There was little independent research.

In 1990 NBEET prepared an analysis and synthesis of the Schools Council's *Teacher Quality*, the report of the Discipline Review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science, and the report of the ACE working party on teacher education. That report, *The Shape of Teacher Education: Some Proposals* (NBEET 1990b), considered the issues of the quality of preservice education and its relation to length and content, the structure of preservice education, financing practicum supervision, induction, a national professional body for teachers, inservice education, and co-operative arrangements. No additional research into teacher education practice was carried out.

In 1992 the Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training asked DEET to prepare a discussion paper on teacher education. The paper (DEET 1992) raised a number of important issues, but was ultimately flawed by its authors' lack of access to substantial information about what is actually occurring in teacher education. The ministerial paper (Beazley 1993,) which the discussion paper and responses to it informed, did not consider teacher education in great detail, but was generally open and positive in approach.

There have also been discussion papers and reports on teacher education in a number of states.

A central theme of many of the reports and policy statements has been an interrelated set of issues concerned with the connections between theory and practice, the strengthening of the 'practical' outcomes of courses, school-based teacher education, and partnerships between teacher educators and other parties such as the school teaching profession and school authorities. The developing debate about the application to initial teacher education of competency standards for beginning teachers would come within this general theme.

There have been some significant developments involving formal and informal partnerships, internships, school-based seminar and research activities for students; innovations in pedagogy, and the integration of theory and practice.

Another theme has been concerned with strengthening 'content' knowledge - especially mathematics and science. At the same time, 'content' components in initial teacher education courses in a number of institutions are being transferred from Education to other faculties. A difficulty then arises of integrating such 'content' knowledge with practice - of integrating the two major themes of current debate. The maintenance of course coherence through the development of substantial collaborative relationships with other faculties is a challenge now before many Education faculties - and some can learn from the experiences of others if they are aware of those experiences.

In conclusion, then, a more substantial and publicly available base of information and analysis is needed so that the school teaching profession, school authorities and the Commonwealth can join with teacher educators in developing optimal programs, policies, and strategy. If there is not such an information base, then limited and out-of-date knowledge and supposition, even prejudice, are all that can be drawn upon.

This research project seeks to assist the development of the necessary information base. However, it cannot meet the full extent of need for information and analysis, and one outcome of the project may be an indication of how other sources of information and means of dissemination can be developed and strengthened.

Project outline

The project involves gathering material from all initial teacher education programs in Australia, and gaining in-depth information about a number of key programs which best exemplify particular approaches or innovations.

Issues to be considered include the following (which have significant overlap):

- course philosophy, aims and objectives
- course structure, and nature and degree of coherence
- content (courses, topics and detail as appropriate)
- pedagogy and sites of learning (for example, schools and other non-university settings)
- assessment methods and criteria
- partnerships and collaboration in course development and/or delivery with
  - the school teaching profession, school authorities, schools
  - other university faculties.

Enrolment statistics by course type will be incorporated in the analysis. Recent and planned developments will be documented, and likely future trends discussed.

An informal reference group of stakeholders in initial teacher education will respond to material at various stages in the project. A list of those represented on the reference group is appended.

The project is expected to be completed by mid 1995.

Project method

Institutions offering initial teacher education have been asked to supply the project team with documents about their courses. This includes faculty handbooks, course accreditation documents, course outlines, and any other relevant material. This request for documents replaces our initial intention to begin by sending institutions a questionnaire. The change in procedure is intended to avoid unnecessary work for Education faculties, and to help the project team clarify issues at the early stage of the project and thus ensure a better coverage of important issues when considered responses from institutions are required.

After analysis of documents, institutions will be contacted where further information and clarification is required. At this stage we will decide the amount of detail we will obtain about *all* programs compared with the amount of detail and number of programs we consider further in the next stage of the project. This decision will be based on the nature of the substantive information we are collecting, the number and location of programs which appear to best exemplify particular approaches and key innovations, and how resource use in the project is developing.

Around November members of the project team will visit those institutions offering programs identified earlier. Visits will also be made to schools involved in the programs, and consultations held with relevant school teachers, union officials, school authority officers and student teachers where appropriate and where resources allow.

During December the 1994 teacher education enrolment statistics will become available from the Higher Education Division of DEET. These will be analysed and organised into appropriate categories.

Early in 1995 a draft of the final report of the project will be prepared for consideration by the reference group and others, and it is expected that the final report will be published around the middle of the year.

Matters for consideration

During this workshop we would appreciate consideration of the following issues:

- **What are the key issues we need to gain information about so that the outcomes of our project meet the needs for information which exist now or which will emerge in the coming years?** (What do *you*, representing the different stakeholders in initial teacher education, want to know?)
- **How can we solicit information to ensure that we get the necessary level of detail and uncover the important aspects?** (How can we get meaningful and concise information about, for example, the level and nature of over-all course coherence; the degree and nature of integration of 'theory' and 'practice'; how competencies such as those in the area 'developing relationships and working with others' are developed and assessed? How do we bridge the gap between theory/intentions and actual practice in such areas?)
- **How can we be certain that there are no significant gaps in the material and information we collect and our analysis and organisation of that material?**
- **How can we best disseminate our findings?**

We would also appreciate other comments and suggestions about our method, and we welcome suggestions of programs which we should investigate in detail because they exemplify particular approaches or innovations.

A sheet which can be completed during or after the workshop is attached, and extra copies of the sheet will be available at the workshop.

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Table 1

Commencing and all students, initial teacher education courses (and fourth year BEd) , Australia, 1993

	3 yr BTeach/BEd		4th year BEd		4 year BEd		Dip Ed		Other	
	Comm	All	Comm	All	Comm	All	Comm	All	Comm	All
EC	991	3,852	708	1,122	342	990	44	51		
Prim	3,557	9,624	1,596	3,417	1,059	2,588	205	256	92	341
Sec	394	916	350	866	2,621	9,267	2,688	3,055	367	1,073
Comb, unspec	136	380	1,837	3,986	523	1,792	696	950	170	455
TOTAL	5,078	14,772	4,491	9,391	4,545	14,637	3,633	4,312	629	1,869

Source: A course by course analysis of enrolment statistics from the Higher Education Division of DEET, checked and amended by Education Faculties. At the time of writing some final amendments to some institutions' figures are still to come. For more detailed and accurate figures see Preston (1994)

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Barbara Preston, Jim Mitchell, Ron Traill and Jim Walker
Centre for Research in Professional Education, University of Canberra

Australian Teacher Education Association Annual Conference, Brisbane, 5 July 1994

WORKSHOP RESPONSE SHEET

Please hand in at the end of the workshop,
or take a copy away with you, give colleagues copies, and after completion return to:

Barbara Preston
21 Boobialla Street
O'Connor ACT 2601
Phone (06) 247 8919 Fax: (06) 247 8779

1. **What do we need information about so that our project meets needs for information which exist now or will emerge in the coming years?** (What do *you*, representing the different stakeholders in initial teacher education, want to know?)

2. **How can we solicit information so that we get the necessary level of detail and uncover the important aspects?** (How can we get meaningful and concise information about, for example, the level and nature of over-all course coherence; the degree and nature of integration of 'theory' and 'practice'; how competencies such as those in the area 'developing relationships and working with others' are developed and assessed? How do we bridge the gap between theory/intentions and actual practice in such areas?)

3. **How can we be certain that there are no significant gaps in the material and information we collect, and our analysis and organisation of that material?**

4. **How can we best disseminate our findings so that they reach you and others who may find them of interest?**

5. **Other comments and suggestions**

6. **Programs you believe we should investigate in detail because they exemplify particular approaches or innovations.** Please indicate what it is that makes the programs of particular interest.

Program and university	Features of interest

Your name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

THANKYOU

SURVEY OF INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

BODIES REPRESENTED ON REFERENCE GROUP

Australian Association for Research in Education

Australian Curriculum Studies Association

Australian Education Union

Australian Teacher Education Association

Australian Teaching Council

DEET Schools and Curriculum Division

DEET Higher Education Division

Independent Education Union of Australia

Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

National Catholic Education Commission

National Council of Independent Schools Associations

National Tertiary Education Union

NBEET Schools Council

Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia